

Full Length Research Paper

The effects of performance assessment approach on democratic attitude of students

Elvan YALÇINKAYA

Faculty of Education, Department of Primary Education, Niğde University, Niğde/Turkey.

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The aim of the research is to analyze the effects of performance assessment approach on democratic attitude of students. The research model is an experimental design with pretest-posttest control groups. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques are used for gathering of data in this research. 46 students participated in this research, with 23 of them in the control group and the remaining 23 in the test group. "Democratic Attitude Scale" is used as data collection tool. In the control group, economy and social life unit is studied with book based approach. In the experiment group, some activities are conducted, using performance assessment approach. The result of the research shows there is significant difference between the two approaches, and is in favor of the experimental group on which performance assessment approach is applied.

Key words: Assessment, evaluation, performance assessment, democratic attitude.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth and changes in the 21st century have gradually increased the significance of education. Undoubtedly, education is an important process for effective and happy life. Today, there are rapid changes and developments. Bringing up individuals that can adopt democratic values and reflect these values in their life should be one of the most important tasks of education. Education is also important in terms of adapting individuals to the society.

Looking at the content and quality of democracy education is obligatory in parallel with the rapid change in the world. The wars and violence in every part of the society and schools have made this change essential. Democracy is one of the most popular concepts of today and it is accepted as the most agreeable one among the regimes being applied today. As all regimes have values and qualifications, democracy also has some specialties, values and qualifications. It is desirable for young generation to adopt and internalize these. Education has

a place in transmitting democratic values to the younger generations. It is not totally possible to make younger generations by only including some relevant subjects to the curriculum (Güven, 2005). That is why schools have a quite important role in bringing up individuals as democratic citizens. Social studies lesson is the most important one among the lessons that aim to inculcate in the students democratic attitude.

The nature and content of social studies lesson in Turkish system of education

The content of primary social studies lesson of 4th-7th grades is based on the disciplines found in social studies field. In Turkey, it can be seen that the terms, social sciences and social studies are used synonymously. But Sözer (1998) indicates that the content of social studies is generally formed with the help of the disciplines of

social sciences; that is why although social sciences and social studies are not synonymous with each other, there is a strong relationship between them. The content that is taken from social sciences is used by being integrated and combined in the units of this lesson. For instance, the content of “*I Am Learning My Past*” unit of social studies curriculum of 4th grade, which has been become valid at 2005, is based primarily on history and then geography, anthropology and sociology (Öztürk, 2007).

In Turkish social studies curriculum, social studies lesson is defined as a primary education lesson reflecting history, geography, economy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political sciences, law and nationality subjects; consisting of combining learning domains in a unit or theme; in which the interaction between social and physical environment of a person is examined in terms of past, present and future; and that is formed based on mass teaching understanding by Ministry of National Education (MEB) (2005). According to Sönmez (1996), social studies is the process of bonding based on social proving and dynamic information dealt as a result of this process. Güngördü (2001) defines social studies as a lesson that is based on cultural heritage, its living specialties and their effects on our lives and the relationship of people with their social and physical environment. According to Safran (1993), the change in social science and its persistent examination cause social sciences to gain an effective place in education, with the aim of socializing the individual. Education is becoming both a social sciences branch and application area of social sciences for creating social studies concept.

The main purpose of social studies lesson in Turkey is to raise effective and responsible citizens. In this sense, it aims to bring up students with national and universal values as well as various concepts and abilities (Öztürk and Devenci, 2011). Social studies lesson is accepted as application area of civics and democracy (Şahiner, 2008). In this lesson, democracy aims to make the individual a unit of the country and the world in order to develop and proliferate his or her civil rights (Sağlam, 2000:67). Social studies lesson has such an important role; therefore, it should be illuminated with active learning methods (Şahiner, 2008).

Constructivist approach and performance assessment

Active learning methods are based on constructivist learning approach. Today, constructivism is one of the most popular learning theories. Constructivists argue that learning is an active process, that knowledge is acquired as learners interact with the environment and modify what they already know. When children encounter new information, ideas and things, they relate them to knowledge they have (Zarrillo, 2000). The learner constructing

knowledge and putting it into practice lie behind constructivism (Perkins, 1999). The structure of knowledge and learning forms the basic foundation of constructivism (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). At first, it was developed as a theory on how students acquire knowledge, and with time, it turned into an approach on how students construct it (Demirel, 2007).

Constructivist approach model is a student based teaching model. In constructivist approach students do not take a passive role in learning, but an active role. Guest (2003) defines constructivist approach as a learning approach which is based on active participation of the students such as critical thinking and problem solving. According to Muirhead (2006), constructivism is a student based approach that makes learners responsible based on their learning experiences. In Turkish educational system, opinions about constructivist approach are adopted and given attention. Since 2005, Ministry of National Education has made fundamental changes in the educational system. From this date on, lessons have been prepared according to constructivist approach. From 2005 to 2006, it started getting off the ground gradually. Social studies lesson curriculum was prepared according to constructivist approach in 2006 to 2007 school years for 6th grades; 2007-2008 school years for 7th grades and 2008-2009 school years for 8th grades. After the change of the curriculum, Çelikkaya (2008) presented that constructivist approach in social studies lesson is more effective in increasing the success of students and the permanence of information than traditional teaching method.

When the social studies curriculum that was prepared according to constructivist approach is examined, some important changes about assessment and evaluation were paid attention to. It is necessary for the applied assessment and evaluation techniques to be appropriate for constructivist learning approach. The reason is that, in the 21st century, learning is not only related to learning truths and methods, but also related to the use of and integration of knowledge process. That is why educators need evaluation in education, aside from only learning (Fadel et al., 2007).

Recently, traditional forms of education have taken the flak. The relation between evaluation and educational reform centre on large scale evaluation is investigated. Frederiksen and Collins (1989) and Wiggins (1993) suggest that curriculum and pedagogical change can only be possible by the simultaneous changes in evaluation and they point out the impact of steady evaluation system on education system (D’Amico, 1999).

Educational assessment has undergone a revolution for recent twenty-thirty years. Approximately 20 years ago, almost all judgments about students’ achievement were based on tests. In all cases, assessment is the process of developing and implementing tests. Well-designed and developed appropriate tests can provide useful information and should be part of social studies

assessment; but even the best tests do not provide a complete picture of what our students know, are able to do and value. Tests capture students' performance at one point in time, limit ways of expressing knowledge and require performance in artificial situations divorced from typical social studies activities. Today's understanding of assessment emerged as an alternative to these traditional tests and it can be called *performance assessment, authentic assessment or alternative assessment* (Zarrillo, 2000). Alternative assessment concept is used to define the tools that are out of the assessment tools, not used in traditional assessment (Çepni, 2007).

Authentic assessment is an understanding of assessment which is based on assessment of various situations which people come across in real life rather than test based assessment in evaluating the performance of the students. It is an alternative for tests (Zarrillo, 2000; Williams, 1998). It is more authentic (about real life) and is student based compared to traditional assessment and evaluation (Bahar et al., 2006:49). In this assessment, the knowledge of the students are evaluated by applications of real life, and not assessed by tests. It also proves their abilities (Pierce and O'Malley, 1992).

Herman et al. (1992) describe *performance assessment* as: it is an assessment in which students develop appropriate abilities, learn new things by remembering their previous knowledge, do complicated and important tasks on the purpose of solving real and authentic problems (DiMartino et al., 2007).

Usually, there is a strong flow to replace traditional tests with performance assessment for the purpose of fixing (Messick, 1994; Lewis, 1996; OECD, 1996; Hill et al., 1997; Saranchuk, 1998). Many recent researches prove that performance assessment is an effective assessment technique (Berryman and Russel, 2001). Khattri et al. (1997) state that since performance assessment was added to educational assessment system, it has developed educational activities significantly. Performance assessment types are: portfolio, rubric, self-assessment, peer assessment, group assessment, control list, attitude scale, observation, performance task, project task etc.

Research on performance assessment in Turkey implemented in social studies lessons since 2005 are mostly for identifying students', teacher candidates' and teachers' opinions and problems (Akdağ, 2009; Akdağ and Çoklar, 2009; Şeker, 2009; Çiftçi, 2010; Secer, 2010; Şahiner and Arslan, 2011).

Democratic attitude in social studies lesson

The fundamental basis of social studies lesson is raising effective and participating citizens for democratic and modern society (Michaels, 1979; Barth, 1980; Safran, 1993; Sözer, 1998; Güngördü, 2001; Barton and Levstik, 2004; MEB, 2005; Öztürk, 2007; Öztürk and Deveci, 2007;

Çelikkaya, 2008; NCSS, 2008). NCSS (2008) indicates that civic competence is not the only responsibility of social studies, but it is more vital to social studies than any other subject area in the schools, which illustrates their belief that educating students who are committed to the ideas and values of democracy is the ultimate aim of education.

The content areas of social studies relate directly to the organization and progress of human society and to man as a member of social groups. Schools are assumed to prepare students' citizenship to participate energetically and responsibly in a democratic society (Nasreen et al., 2011). Social studies lesson can be accepted as the application field of citizenship education and democracy. The attitudes of the students in social studies lesson may give tips about the future of democracy. Healthy democracy may enable a person to be developed entirely. By preventing attitudes and behaviors that may be handicaps for the development of democracy, one can make students to be good persons in countries, regions and the world at large (Sağlam, 2000).

A great number of countries that have adopted democracy are trying to get their citizens to have democratic attitudes and skills through education programs. The individuals in Turkey are also made to acquire democratic values through various subjects in the direction of goals taking place in education programs. It is seen that although human rights and democracy are dealt with in all of the lessons in elementary education programs, social studies lesson definitely takes the precedence. When the aims and content of social studies lesson are examined, it will be seen that, unlike the others, it provides the individuals with democratic values not indirectly but directly through the units and subjects (Çiftçi, 2013). As it is seen, social studies is an important lesson which aims to make children have democratic values, to improve their democratic life and to bring up individuals with democratic characteristics (Çiftçi, 2013).

When related literature is examined, it can be seen that there are both theoretical (Büyükdüvenci, 1990; Kepenekçi, 2003; Kıncal and Işık, 2003; Güven and Akkus, 2004) and applied studies (Gömleksiz, 1993; Yanardağ, 2000; Saracaloğlu et al., 2004; Karadağ et al., 2006; Ercoşkun and Nalçacı, 2008; Genç and Kalafat, 2007; Genç and Kalafat, 2008; Gömleksiz and Kan, 2008; Ektem and Sünbül, 2011; Demircioğlu et al., 2011; Çiftçi, 2013). The applied studies are mostly for identifying the democratic attitudes of the students, teacher candidates and teachers. The aim of the study- to identify democratic attitude of primary school students- which is rare is remarkable. There are also experimental researches that aim to study the effect of students' democratic attitude levels (Duman and Şahiner, 2008; Kerimgil, 2008). In one of his researches, Kerimgil (2008) tried to determine the effect of the curriculum based on constructivist learning on teacher candidates' representative thinking and democratic attitude. Duman and Şahiner (2008) made an

experimental study in order to identify the effects of active learning techniques in social studies teaching on students' democratic attitude. Owing to the relationship between democracy and social studies, there are some studies dealing with democracy and social studies together in Turkey (Aydeniz, 2010; Başaran, 2006; Beldağ, 2003; Duman and Şahiner, 2008; Hürfikir, 2004; Küçük, 2008; Koçoğlu, 2008; Sağlam, 2000; Yazıcı, 2003 cited in Çiftçi, 2013).

The aim of the research

In this research, the effects of performance assessment approach towards democratic attitude of the students have been analyzed. It is thought that these effects can be useful for researchers and social studies teachers in terms of offering different kinds of ideas. Within the scope of this aim, the answers of the following questions have been searched:

1. Is there any significant difference between democratic attitude pretest points of the students who are in experimental and control groups?
2. Is there any significant difference between democratic attitude pretest and posttest points of control group students?
3. Is there any significant difference between democratic attitude pretest and posttest grades of experimental group students?
4. Is there any significant difference between democratic attitude posttest grades of the students who are in experimental and control groups?

METHOD

Research design

In this research, which aims to examine the effects of performance assessment approach on democratic attitude of students in the social studies lessons of seventh grade, experimental design (pretest-posttest) was used. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques have been used for data gathering in this research. The research process is summarized in Table 1.

Data collection tool

In the research, *Democratic Attitude Scale* has been used as data collection tool. This scale has been developed by Gömleksiz (1993). The attitude scale of this research is the most common attitude scale being used to measure the attitude. The attitude scale is Likert type (Tavşancıl, 2002). In the scale 5 level likert type has been used. The answerer has been asked to choose one of the following answers for each question: "Totally agree", "Agree", "Undetermined", "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree". Positive answers have been graded from 5 to 1 starting with "Totally agree" option; negative answers have been graded from 1 to 5 starting with "Strongly disagree".

The basic democratic principles used in forming the patterns of

the scale are as follows (Gömleksiz, 1993):

1. Any idea can be delaminated (Unless they cause violence, ideas cannot be categorized as moderate or extreme, useful or useless, legitimate or illegitimate).
2. Ideas should be expressed freely.
3. Ideas should be organized freely.
4. Every citizen has general and equal right to vote, no matter how the person's race, gender, economical existence or intellectual competence is.
5. The majority has right to decide and rule, on condition to protect the rights of the minority.
6. Everyone is equal in front of the law.
7. Believing in the human mind is the basis.
8. Respecting the human honor and dignifying personality is the basis.
9. Individuals should work in sensibility and corporation.

In developing the scale, these principles have been dealt as the determiner of the democratic attitude that is aimed to be scaled. After the factor analysis of the scale, the following sub segments are identified (Gömleksiz, 1993):

1. Equality
2. Being scientific
3. Clearness
4. Respecting opinion
5. Corporation
6. Attendance
7. Voting
8. Minority rights

In order to support the quantitative findings, qualitative findings have been used. That is why assessment forms, which were used at practice phase of the research, have also been used as data gathering tool. Field evaluation forms in *Teacher Guide Books* have been used in the practice. The items of self and peer assessment forms are as follows:

1. Being ready to work
2. Listening to others
3. Sharing the responsibilities
4. Supporting group mates
5. Attending discussions
6. Actualizing the opinions
7. Respecting different kinds of opinions
8. Being disposed to participate
9. Using time productively
10. Carrying out the tasks.

Group assessment form consists of 14 items. The items are for evaluating the group generally. Triple grading (1-never, 2-sometimes, and 3-always) has been used in the items of the form. Also there is *comment* part that enables students to express their other opinions. The opinion of the students written in this part has been analyzed.

Experimental process steps

The research was carried out on seventh grade students of a public primary school at 2010 to 2011 education years. There are 46 students at research group. 23 of them were assigned to experimental group and 23 of them were assigned to control group randomly. The application process of the research is 5 weeks three hours per week and 15 h in total. The research has been carried out simultaneously on experimental and control groups. Because of the fact that the students come together for group works after lesson

Table 1. Information about experimental design applied in the research.

Group	Pretest	Process	Posttest
Control	Democratic Attitude Scale	Traditional Assessment	Democratic Attitude Scale
Experimental	Democratic Attitude Scale	Performance Assessment	Democratic Attitude Scale

Table 2. T-test results about democratic attitude pretest grades of control and experimental groups.

Group	n	\bar{X}	df	t	P
Control	23	106.52	22	1.329	0.197
Experimental	23	107.39			p>0.05

lessons the studies of the students have been limited within course hours. Before the application there was a presentation to all of the students about performance assessment approach. But the control group students did not know that they were in control group.

The groups consist of four or five students. In the experimental group the evaluation of "Economic and Social Life" unit has been done with performance assessment approach. At the same time, the subjects in the student's book which has been prepared according to constructivist approach have been discussed also. Current social studies course book has been prepared according to constructivist approach and performance evaluation techniques which take place in social studies curriculum. More performance task, project task and students' product folder stand out in existing social studies lessons. In this study, performance evaluation in group technique, which is a kind of performance evaluation approach in group, has been used. Self, peer and group evaluating strategies out of performance evaluation techniques have been used. Yet, in control group performance assessment approach has not been applied. Democratic Attitude Scale has been applied as pretest to both groups. After the students of experimental group were separated into groups, they were assigned to performance tasks. The groups started their studies after each student was told what to do. Performance task subjects are determined according to acquisitions of "Economic and Social Life" unit and the subjects have been assigned to the students. The performance tasks assigned to students are as follows:

1. The factors affecting agriculture
2. Silk road
3. We are establishing a foundation
4. Madrasah in Ottoman
5. Professions

Students researched in library, internet and via various sources and then they put these information into report to share them with group members and discuss them. Later, students made presentation of their works to the class. After the presentation, self-assessment, peer assessment and group assessment forms have been applied. A wide group has been enabled to give feedback to the students via performance evaluation technique applied in experiment group. By this means, students have found an opportunity to evaluate not only their friends but also their group. At the end of the study, the results were assessed by the teacher. The forms on these techniques have been applied to the experimental group students intensely. After every group activity, students attended intensely by filling up related evaluation forms. The reason students evaluate themselves, their friends and their group is that, it is thought that these assessment techniques may have effect on the democratic attitudes of the students.

In the experimental group, the students kept their studies and the results in their result files. They also put assessment forms in the result files. Their result files have been assessed by their peers (peer assessment) and their teacher. After five week application "Democratic Attitude Scale" was applied as posttest to experimental and control groups.

Analysis of the data

The data acquired from Democratic Attitude Scale were transmitted to a computer statistics program called SPSS 16.0 and the whole statistical assessment of the data was done with this program. Pre and post applications of the control and experimental groups were compared by t-test and any significant difference was examined. The answers of the students in comment section have also been examined. The answers are given in the findings part of this work as direct quotations.

FINDINGS

Quantitative findings

T-test analysis result of the Democratic Attitude Scale pretest of experimental and control group students is shown in Table 2.

When the statistical data presented in Table 2 were examined, no significant differences between pretest grades of experimental and control group students ($t=1.329$; $p>0.05$) were observed. According to the data, the pre- application pretest grades resemble each other. That is why, the democratic attitude of control and experimental group students is at similar levels.

In Table 3, no significant differences between pretest and posttest grades of control group ($t=-1.040$; $p>0.05$) were observed. It is seen that the students' book of the control group do not increase the democratic attitude of the students significantly.

In Table 4, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between pretest and posttest grades of experimental groups. This significant difference is in favor of posttest. ($t=-3.290$; $p<0.05$). This situation clearly states that performance assessment method increased the student's democratic attitudes positively.

Table 3. T-Test results about democratic attitude pretest-posttest grades of control groups.

Evaluation	n	\bar{X}	df	t	P
Pretest	23	106.52	22	-1.040	0.310
Posttest	23	107.52			p>0.05

Table 4. T-test results about democratic attitude pretest-posttest grades of experimental groups.

Evaluation	n	\bar{X}	df	t	P
Pretest	23	107.39	22	-3.290	0.003*
Posttest	23	110.43			p<0.05

*p<.05.

Table 5. T-Test results about democratic attitude posttest grades of control and experimental groups.

Group	n	\bar{X}	df	t	P
Control	23	107.52	22	2.172	0.0410*
Experimental	23	110.43			p<0.05

*p<.05.

When the statistical data presented in Table 5 were examined, no significant differences between posttest grades of experimental and control group students ($t=2.172$; $p<0.05$) were observed. According to the result, it can be said that performance assessment approach is more effective than traditional approach in increasing democratic attitude of the students.

Qualitative findings

The opinion of the students is written at the comment section of the forms, and is used and filled during practice. The opinions of the students were not changed; there was an attempt to reflect them originally. Additionally, the students have been nicknamed.

A student named Asli expresses her view about expressing opinions freely, which is one of the most important principles of democracy:

Asli: *While our teacher was preparing our group's performance task, there were a lot of opinions. We talked about various opinions when we first come together as a group. According to me some of them were very nice; I didn't like some of them. But at last we reached a conclusion.*

Nazli: *To tell openly, Ahmet tried to make whatever he wanted in our group. I was uncomfortable for this reason. I think everyone's opinion is important. That's why we have some disagreements; he wanted to change my group,*

but I didn't agree. We prepared a nice project with my friends. But I think we could have done better.

Nazli emphasizes equality in her comment about the activity mentioned earlier. She thinks that everyone should be equal while working together. It can be said that Nazli's democratic attitude has been affected positively by means of applied practice. Student expresses that she understood the importance of equal right to speak. She both criticized herself and her group.

Erkan expresses his opinions about this practice as:

Erkan: *I like working in group and evaluating ourselves. We filled forms to evaluate our group mates and group. While I was grading my best friend I tried to grade him according to his performance. I thought I should grade him what he deserves.*

Students express that they shared tasks, they listened to others' opinions, attended discussions, tried to actualize their opinions and respect different opinions when they were together. Quantitative data showing the fact that students' democratic attitudes have been developed with the help of this performance evaluation based on group activities were supported by qualitative data.

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

When the findings of the research were analyzed, perform

performance assessment approach increases the democratic attitude of the students significantly rather than traditional approach. According to the statistical findings of the research by Şahiner and Duman (2008), active learning techniques have a significant difference in democratic attitudes in favor of experimental groups. Besides, it is not in agreement with the work of Gömleksiz (1993) in which the effects of collusive learning on democratic attitude were examined and the work of Şimşek et al. (2004, 2006) which is about the effects of collusive learning on democratic attitude. Similarly, there are some differences in the result of the work of Şimşek et al. (2009) about the effects of jigsaw and together learning on democratic attitude. It is not a right attitude to expect that all approaches have the same effects on students. Some methods may be very effective in bringing aim, attitude, value or ability and some may be less effective. The relation of performance assessment studies with democratic values cannot be ignored, because students learn to be more objective and fair by evaluating themselves, their groups and their class mates.

Similar to our study, in one of the studies of Kerimgil (2008), he tried to determine the effects of constructivist approach based curriculum on teacher candidates' reflective thinking and democratic attitude. The result of the research showed that constructivist approach based curriculum has effect on teacher candidates' in-class democratic attitude. In Evaluation and Assessment based on Constructivism Theory, Semerci (2001) expresses that assessment and evaluation should be authentic in constructivism, in which student has right to speak. The result of the study of Aycan and Çalık (2003) is that the way of teaching the lessons has effect on the students' democratic attitude. Duman and Şahiner (2008) found an important difference in favor of experimental group in democratic attitude of the students of active learning techniques in primary school social studies lesson.

According to Hotaman (2010), a democratic educational program should give priority to process and performance assessment methods and techniques that provide knowledge and assess the students effectively than classical measurement and assessment techniques. Our research results support Hotaman's opinion. This is because evaluation in democratic curriculum should not be product or result based evaluation, but should be process and performance evaluation and evaluating an individual's performance in different intelligence and ability fields. Formalization and education should be enabled by predicating an individual's performance.

Assessment tools that enable alternative evaluation should be used, tools that are far beyond in evaluating student's performance (Hotaman, 2010).

According to the research results, the results of democratic attitude scale show that there is a significant difference between experimental and control groups. The difference is in favor of the experimental group. The

following suggestions can be made within the frame of the acquired results:

- (i) The practice may take a longer time.
- (ii) The effectiveness of performance assessment method can be tested at different grades.
- (iii) The effectiveness of performance assessment method can be tested for other lessons.
- (iv) Self, peer and group assessment techniques can be tested separately.
- (v) The effectiveness of different education or assessment techniques for bringing democratic attitude can be examined.

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